



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

TAJIKISTAN

SUCCESS STORY

Bringing Hope for Survival

USAID's cash and crops helps the Tajikistan's poorest to survive the winter



Shamygul of a small village of Leningrad in central Tajikistan, a recipient of USAID food assistance.

Photo: USAID

"Seeds and cash provided to me by the American people will help my family survive through the winter and have some hopes for a better future,"

- says Shamygul.

Shamygul lives with her 80-year old mother who is blind and increasingly infirm, and a 14-year old daughter in a small village of Leningrad about 2.5 hours drive from the Tajik capital Dushanbe. Her house has not seen glazing for years, and the pile of cotton stalks will be the only source for heating in winter. Shamygul earns the living for her immediate family and the seven children of her diseased sister by baking mud bricks in the sun and selling them to her neighbors at \$1 a dozen. Income does not stretch far for this 47-year old, and the coming winter with its promised severe colds puts yet a deeper frown of her already worried face. "We live on half a kilogram of meat a week when I work," she says, trying to sound optimistic.

To help Shamygul and other needy people in the poorest rural areas across Tajikistan, USAID distributes seeds and cash through a food assistance program in cooperation with local communities. The program works with local village committees to identify the most misfortunate members of the community – single mothers with small or disabled children, old people without families to support them, people with disabilities that can't find employment. Before winter comes, each of such individuals will receive \$150 in cash to purchase food throughout the winter and 50 kilograms of wheat seeds to grow grain for the next year.

It's not much, but Shamygul says that this small donation will keep her from total starvation during the winter. "We'll stretch and save this money as much as we can, so that there's at least a little food every day," she says. She plans to use some of the money to have her small lot of land plowed, so that she can grow winter wheat from donated seeds.

The USAID program, implemented in this area of Tajikistan by Save the Children, spends some time educating Shamygul and other recipients on how to ration the money, so that it's used for the essential needs only. It has also arranged with the village's elderly, who used to be the chief economist of a soviet collective farm, to provide advice on making the most of the seeds as well.